

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) Process for hydroprocessing of hydrocarbon feedstock containing sulfur and/or nitrogen contaminants, said process comprising first contacting the hydrocarbon feedstock with hydrogen in the presence of at least one first group VIII metal on a first acidic support catalyst, and thereafter contacting the feedstock with hydrogen in the presence of at least one second group VIII metal catalyst on a less acidic support, wherein the said less acidic support has an acidity, as defined herein, of at most 10 $\mu\text{mol/g}$, with the proviso that the acidity is lower than the acidity of the support of the at least one first catalyst.
2. (original) Process according to claim 1, wherein the said hydroprocessing comprises hydroconversion, hydrocracking, hydrotreating, hydrogenating, hydrofinishing and hydroisomerization of petroleum feedstocks, such as solvents and middle distillate.
3. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the support of the at least one first group VIII metal catalyst is selected from the group of zeolites and zeolite containing supports.
4. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the support of the at least one second group VIII metal catalyst is selected from the group of silica-alumina and other non-zeolite supports.

5. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the said strongly acidic support has an acidity, as defined herein, of at least 5 $\mu\text{mol/g}$.

6. (currently amended) Process according to claim 1, wherein the said less acidic support has an acidity, as defined herein, of at most 10 $\mu\text{mol/g}$, with the proviso that the acidity is lower than the acidity of the support of the at least one first catalyst the organic sulfur level in the feed to the second catalyst bed is less than 50 ppm.

7. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the Group VIII metal of both the first and second catalyst have been selected, independently of each other, from the group of Pt, Pd, Ir, Rh, Ru and combinations of two or more of these elements.

8. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the amounts of Group VIII metal, calculated on the combined weight of the metal and the support in the first and in the second catalyst, are independently of each other between 0.001 and 2.5 wt.%.

9. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the volume of the at least one first catalyst is between 10 and 50% of the total volume of the first and second catalysts.

10. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the temperature at the inlet of the first catalyst is between 100 and 400 °C.

11. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the hydrogen pressure is between 0.5 and 300 bar.

12. (currently amended) Process according to claim 1, wherein the organic sulfur level in the feed to the second catalyst bed is less than 500 ppm, ~~preferably less than 50 ppm~~.

13. (currently amended) Process according to claim 12, wherein the organic nitrogen level in the feed to the second catalyst is less than 100 ppm, ~~preferably less than 20 ppm~~.

14. (currently amended) Process according to claim 1, wherein the said first and second catalysts beds are present in ~~on~~ one reactor, or in different reactors.

15. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the effluent from the last of said at least one first catalysts is passed through a stripper prior to contacting it with the said second catalyst on a less acidic support.

16. (new) Process for hydroprocessing of hydrocarbon feedstock containing sulfur and/or nitrogen contaminants, said process comprising first contacting the hydrocarbon feedstock with hydrogen in the presence of at least one first group VIII metal on a first acidic support catalyst, and thereafter contacting the feedstock with hydrogen in the presence of at least one second group VIII metal catalyst on a less acidic support, wherein the said strongly acidic support has an acidity, as defined herein, of at least 5 $\mu\text{mol/g}$

17. (new) Process according to claim 16, wherein the organic sulfur level in the feed to the second catalyst bed is less than 500 ppm.

18. (new) Process according to claim 16, wherein the said hydroprocessing comprises hydroconversion, hydrocracking, hydrotreating, hydrogenating, hydrofinishing and hydroisomerization of petroleum feedstocks, such as solvents and middle distillate.

19. (new) Process according to claim 16, wherein the support of the at least one first group VIII metal catalyst is selected from the group of zeolites and zeolite containing supports.

20. (new) Process according to claim 16, wherein the volume of the at least one first catalyst is between 10 and 50% of the total volume of the first and second catalysts.